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TWICE LOVED,

AN ORIGINAL SOCIETY PLAY,

IN A PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS,

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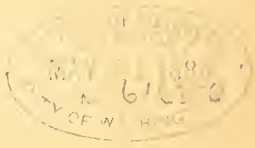

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CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA.

STANLY MAITLAND, afterwards the Earl of Eglinton.
COUNT MONTANO, Gambler, Stanly's friend.
DON RIVERO, afterwards the Marquis De Lassee.
RUY EDGARDO, Gambling friend.
DON COMANDO, Deaf Nobleman.
DE MAURIER, Clergyman—French.
PARDOE. Butler to Earl Eglinton.
SIR GEORGE ELLIOT, friend of Earl Eglinton.
JEDALIA, Daughter of Montano, afterwards Agnes Sherwood.
COUNTESS OF EGLINTON, Wife of the Earl.
MRS. JULIA FOXALL, House-keeper to the Countess.
The HONORABLE, MISS SKEGGS.
PETRA, Jedalia's Attendant.

Lady Guests, Gentlemen Guests, Servants, etc.

TMP96-006828

PROLOGUE.

A FORCED MARRIAGE.

SCENE—Nice (Italy).

A private dining room in Hotel Santiago superbly furnished. Steps centre at back leading on to a balcony. Perspective of hills and bay. Gondolas pass and repass. Singing heard with guitar accompaniment. Opening music lively. As the curtain rises Count Montano, Stanly Maitland, De Maurier, Don Rivero, Signor Comando, Ruy Edgardo are discovered seated. Montano, centre, facing audience; Stanley, L; De Maurier, R. Two waiters are uncorking bottles of champagne—Pouring into glasses. The table is beautifully decorated—eatables, etc. Count Montano rises with glass in hand. Omnes shouting "A speech! a speech!" The Count waves the waiters to go. They go off L.

Count M. Gentlemen, as the present dinner may be the last—

Omnes. No, no!

Count M. That is—circumstances may arise which may prevent my entertaining you for some time at least.

Stanly M. What for Montano? What's happened? Are their spies in the camp!

Sig. C. Pies in cans? Never heard of that concoction before!

Don R. (*Screams.*) Spies in the camp—fool!

Sig. C. Camp stool? No, thanks, I like the chair best.

(All laugh uproarously.)

Ruy E. Its an astonishing fact that deaf persons always will talk.

(Pulls Comando.)

Count M. Not spies, but a betrayer!

Stanly M. Name him, Luigi, and he shall taste a few inches of steel. You know that I am an adept at blood letting.

Count M. Yes, Stanly, I am aware of it; your skill is great and you probe the heart even unto death!

De M. Come to the point, Montano, life is short—don't preach—I hear enough of that.

Don R. There's a clergyman, upon my word. In spite of your cloth, I do believe that your envious.

Sig. C. Enemy? I never was his enemy!

Don R. Who said you were, you donkey?

Sig. C. Not Don Ki—Don Rivero.

(*All laugh clapping on table. Maitland rises, bows mockingly to Rivero, which the latter returns.*)

Ruy E. (*Rises bowing.*) Don Ki Rivero. (*Takes knife from table and taps him on the back.*) Arise, Sir Don Ki Rivero, by command of Comando, who thus dubs thee by courtesy to perpetuate a future for all the little donkeys to come.

"Arise, Sir Knight, how proud you should be,
Pray, rival Quixote in his true errantry.
Be brave and fight for your noble country.
But should you get wounded in arm or in knee,
And from the battle would homeward flee,
Give a parting kick like a true donkey."

(*All laugh shouting "we drink the health of the new Don Ki."*)

Count M. Gentlemen, please be serious, I have something to say.

(*He becomes agitated. sits down.*)

De M. Let me speak Montano. (*He rises.*) Gentlemen, I believe that you will all endorse my sentiments when I say that we have always received the greatest hospitality at the hands of our friend, Montano.

Omnes. We have! we have!

Stanly M. Who ever doubted that?

De M. And you will confess that he is ever ready to assist his friends.

Stanly M. And, I reiterate, who ever doubted that?

Omnes. He is! he is!

De M. What would you say, then, if I told you that he has been betrayed; and what does the betrayer deserve?

Stanly M. Annihilation!

Don R. As I am a *Don Ki*, I vote for kicking him to death.

Ruy E. Feed him on "canned pies."

Sig. C. Fly! Where? Can't fly—no wings.

De M. Gentlemen, I am serious; have done with this nonsense.

Omnes. (*Seriously.*) We are ready to hear and to do.

De M. In the first place, fill your glasses. (*They do so*) I wish all here to drink the health of a newly wedded couple.

Omnes. (*Raise glasses.*) To the newly wedded couple.

Stanly M. The name, De Maurier, the name.

De M. You will soon learn it; they are not wedded yet, but will be in a few moments.

Stanly M. Where will they be married?

De M. Here!

Omnes. Here?

Stanly M. Who will perform the cermony?

De M. I will!

Omnes. You?

De M. Yes. This will conclude our evening's entertainment—so our noble host told us. Whilst the table is cleared, we will listen to the music on the waters.

(*They retire to the balcony. A gondola stops and the occupants sing. When finished, they glide past. — Two waiters enter L. and clear the table quickly. They all come down steps from balcony.*)

D. R. Now we will have some fun. This is one of De Maurier's jokes.

Stanly M. (*laughing*). Where is the bride?

COUNT M. This is no joke, gentlemen, and the bride will appear directly. *(He comes centre, hesitates for a moment, then speaks.)* Stanly Maitland, in the presence of your friends and mine, I offer you my daughter's hand.

OMNES. Your daughter! Have you a daughter?

COUNT M. Yes. *(Agitated.)* I await your answer.

STANLY M. *(who seems stunned, quickly recovers.)* I—I—regret, Montano—although we are friends—great friends—that—that—it is impossible for me to accept your proposal. *(Turns aside confusedly.)*

COUNT M. But she loves you. I requested her to tell me the cause of her sadness, and she confided to me her great affection for you. If you will wed my child and make her happy, I will endow her with all I am possessed. As my trusted friend, you know the extent of my property.

STANLY M. *(aside.)* Ally myself to him—I who have but to-day received such glorious news—never! *(Aloud.)* It is most strange, Montano, that you make this proposal before our friends. *(In a passion.)* I consider it an insult.

COUNT M. My child is more dear to me than life. She is all that is left me of a happiness, ah! so short-lived. Your skill saved her almost from the grave! She loves you.

STANLEY M. *(aside.)* Has she told him all? No! or he would have killed me! *(Aloud.)* Montano, I regret that I cannot comply with your request. I—I—that is—I do not love her. As you say, I—I saved her life; I can do no more.

COUNT M. Stanly, I—I—scarcely like to allude to the past—I mean our acquaintance. You were poor, without friends or money. You had just recovered from a severe illness. I found you seated near the river, perishing from actual want—homeless. I took you to my hotel, I gave you food, shelter, money.

STANLY M. Yes, you did all that, but I do not intend to pay such a price in return. Once for all, Montano, have done with this farce. As you have chosen to take this ill-advised step before our friends, you must take the consequences. I will not marry your daughter.

COUNT M. *(with suppressed passion)* Why not? Your reason?

OMNES. Yes, Stanley, your reason.

DON R. I wish that I had the chance.

DE M. Stanly, be advised—you are on a volcano!

STANLY M. Let it burst forth—it will consume him, not me. Don't you interfere, De Maurier.

COUNT M. Your reason, sir, your reason!

STANLY M. *(in a rage,)* Well, as you drive me to do it, I will tell you. No power on earth can compel me to marry a gambler's daughter.

COUNT M. (*with contempt.*) You are one yourself.

DON R. Yes, and shared all the spoils.

OMNES. Shame! shame!

STANLY M. (*maliciously.*) If I am a gambler, if I shared the spoils, I do not add the name of "forger" to the list.

COUNT M. Wretch! (*Turning to the rest.*) I have now done with entreaties—it is time to act. Gentlemen, will you stand by me?

OMNES. We will.

STANLY M. (*alarmed.*) I will not stay to be insulted.

(He attempts to go L.)

De Mau. (*intercepts him.*) Stop!

Count M. Thanks, De Maurier. (*To the rest.*) I will no longer delay informing you of this man's villainy. Gentlemen, my life has not a happy past nor pleasant future. But of that past I nourished a sweet budding flower. I tended it with anxious loving care—I shielded it from winter's rude blast and summer's scorching sun. Under this treatment my bud bloomed into an exotic so pure, so lovely— (*Bursting into grief.*) Oh! Jedalia, my child, my sweet perfumed flower! You have been torn ruthlessly from the stem and left to die! *(He recovers himself.)* Pardon a father's grief. I will no longer speak in metaphors.

Omnes. Depend on us, we will see you righted.

Count M. My Jedalia is not aware that her father is a gambler, a—a—forger, so this man asserts. Were it in my power, I could prove that I never was the latter. But let that pass. I had her educated away from here. When old enough, I surrounded her with protection in a happy home, away from the gaieties of the city. She believes me an honorable, independent gentleman.

Don R. You are a gentleman.

Count M. *(bows.)* An illness seized my child. The physicians could not fathom the cause. Distracted with grief, I made Stanly Maitland my confident. He then told me that he had practiced as physician, that he was an American doctor in the army and had cured the most desperate cases. I brought him to the bedside of my child, and—and he saved her—only to bring ruin and disgrace upon her. Gentlemen, under the garb of physician and friend, Stanly Maitland betrayed my child.

Stanly M. (*sneeringly.*) And you call that love? Bah! Her affection for me must indeed be great, to confess this to you. You are not going to entrap me, Montano—I will *not* marry her.

Count M. We will see. De Maurier, prepare—

(De Maurier hastily improvises an altar. Rivero assists him, as do the rest. De Maurier draws forth a surplice from a valise, dons it. Stanley attempts to walk out, but is stopped by De Maurier who points a pistol at the former's head.)

De M. My clothes prevent my sheding human blood; but, if you attempt to quit this room, I will shoot you down as I would a mad dog.

Stanly M. (*aside.*) What shall I do? I am at their mercy. I hate her. I wish I had never seen her. Supposing I let them perform this farcical marriage, I can repudiate it afterwards. There are a thousand ways of escape then—*now* there are none. Yes, I must submit, or I cannot get away; and it is important to do so, after the joyful news of this morning. (*Aloud.*) I tell you that I protest against this shameful plot.

Count M. (*with determination.*) You can protest as much as you like, but you *shall* make an honest woman of my child.

(Rings bell. Enter R. Jedalia, dressed in white, a tulle veil covering her whole form. She leans on Petra. The Count throws his arms around her. The gentlemen bow. Stanly turns away. Jedalia agitated.)

Gentlemen, my daughter Jedalia.

Don R. (*aside.*) How lovely she is!

Count M. Go on, De Maurier.

Stanly M. Yes, go on with this farce, you cowards; go on with this mock marriage. My life is too dear to me, and I will not sacrifice it to—

COUNT M. (*with a terrible look.*) Perform the ceremony quickly, De Maurier, so that I may not injure the husband of my child.

(He takes ring out of vest pocket and presses it to his lips with a look of agony.)

With this ring I wedded your mother, my Jedalia. Like yourself she was but 15 years.

(They retire back. The marriage ceremony is performed quickly; the certificate is signed. Maitland makes the responses in a sullen tone. All congratulate the young bride. Sorrowfully Jedalia puts veil aside from face.)

DON R. (*aside.*) How beautiful she is! Ah! why did I not meet her. And he, that wretch, to repudiate so sweet a flower!

DE M. Count Montano, I congratulate you upon the step which you have taken in this matter. I rejoice that I was here to perform the ceremony. But it has sobered me and taught me a lesson. I am an ordained priest, yet have been led into scenes and gaieties ill befitting my vocation. I have committed this error through a gay disposition. I beg now to tender my best wishes and farewell.

(During the speech, Jedalia looks innocently from De Maurier to her father, surprise depicted on her face. The rest bow and exeunt L. Petra goes off R. D. Don Rivero casts a long, lingering look at Jedalia. Count Montano places certificate in his breast, then clasps Jedalia to his heart. Stanly looks on sullenly. Jedalia advances towards Stanly—looks supplicatingly at him.

JEDALIA. Will you not speak to me, dear Stanly? I—I—love you so much!

STANLY M. (*savagely.*) You have given me proof of it.

JEDALIA. Dear Stanly, I have obeyed my father's commands. Have you not sworn again and again that you love me—that you would make me your wife. I will be so loving, so obedient to you.

STANLY M. Your father and yourself have laid this plot against me. You are my wife, Madam—so you say. Well, I will support you, but I will not acknowledge you publicly.

JEDALIA (*tearfully.*) Why, Stanly? Have I not always loved you?

STANLY M. If you wish to know the reason why, ask your father!

(Jedalia looks from one to the other wringing her hands)

COUNT M. (*intreatingly.*) For the love of heaven, Stanly, do not expose my secret to this innocent child!

STANLY M. (*derisively.*) Innocent?

COUNT M. Innocent until you made her guilty!

JEDALIA. Oh father! what is it—what secret?

STANLY M. Aye—let him tell you, or I will.

COUNT M. (*clasping his hands agitatedly.*) Mercy, Stanly, do have mercy!

JEDALIA. Why will he not acknowledge me, father?

STANLY M. Because your father is a gambler, a debauched roue, and a forger!

Jedalia utters a shriek. Count Montano draws a pistol from his breast, places it to his temple and fires—he falls to the ground. Jedalia flings herself upon his body. Stanly stands for a moment horror stricken, then rushes to the balcony and climbs over. Jedalia remains senseless. Hurried music through this scene.)

TABLEAU.

END OF PROLOGUE.

ACT I.—My Companion.

SCENE I.

(Breakfast room in an elegant house in Park Lane, London. Breakfast laid for two. As the curtain rises, the Earl of Eglinton discovered with the Countess. She assists him. Appointments superb. An elapse of ten years has taken place. Lively opening music.

L. E. (*assisting her.*) Well, love, so you have succeeded at last?

Lady E. Yes, dear Harold, I am so glad that I have engaged her. She seems in mourning for someone. I did not ask her for whom. She is sweet in manner and perfectly beautiful!

L. E. If you are satisfied, my darling, ado, so am I.

Lady E. How indifferent you are, Harold. You would not be so were you to see her.

L. E. I have my eyes for my Ada. Other women do not impress me.

Lady E. Dear Harold, how happy I am. We have now been married four years, but I find no change in you. You surround me with attention, and your first thought is always for your Ada.

L. E. And ever will be. Your recent illness frightened me terribly. Remember, dearest, you were a ward of chancery. I had great difficulty to obtain my little wife, and I hold you as the dearest treasure of my life.

Lady E. You will spoil me, Harold?

L. E. You are too perfect to be spoilt. I am really delighted to think that I can now leave you in safety with a companion. Your time will pass pleasantly indoors, as the Doctor has forbidden all gaiety for a while. It makes me happy to think that I persuaded you to advertise.

Lady E. You are always so thoughtful, Harold.

L. E. I regret to leave you, dearest. You must take great care of yourself during my absence. I am almost induced to resign. It is detestable, this constant travelling to Spain. But, as attache, I am compelled to attend matters of importance there.

Lady E. How long will you be absent?

L. E. Six weeks. It seems an eternity. But under no circumstances can I lessen the time—unless I resign.

Lady E. You must not do so, it would destroy your career—now at its very brightest. It will be more cheerful for me as I have a companion; a congenial one, I am sure. (*Claps hands with childish glee.*) She comes to-day. I am so glad that you are still here. You can see her before your departure. I trust that you will approve of my selection.

L. E. As long as you are pleased, so am I. I hope that her character will bear inspection.

Lady E. Oh! quite so. She brings credentials from Lady Kingsly. I had so many applications, but chose her out of all of them!

(Enter footman L. D., with card on silver salver. The Earl takes card and reads.)

L. E. Miss Agnes Sherwood!

LADY E. My Companion. (*To footman.*) Show the lady into this room.
(*Exit footman.*)

L. E. I will retire, dearest, and finish my letters, as I must leave to-day; besides, my presence may embarrass the lady.

(The Earl pats the Countess on the cheek and exits R. D. into inner room. Enter the footman D. L. He ushers in Miss Agnes Sherwood, then bowing, exits L.

LADY E. (*advances.*) Pray, be seated, Miss Sherwood. May I enquire for whom you are in mourning?

AGNES. I have worn black for many years, madam. I have lost all those I love. (*Sighing.*) There are the credentials as to my respectability. This packet contains many letters from Lady Kingsly. You will perceive that she treated me more like a friend than a companion. Now I again stand alone in the world. (*Raises eyes to Heaven.*)

LADY E. (*taking her hand.*) You are alone no longer. Miss Sherwood, I will be your friend.

AGNES. (*with a surprised look and bright smile.*) Madam!

LADY E. When we are better acquainted, I hope that you will tell me the history of your life. Lord Eglinton's office as attache compels his frequent absence. My delicate health will not permit me to travel at present. I do so long for a true friend—one in whom I can confide.

AGNES. I will be that, if you permit me, madam.

LADY E. I have a large circle of so-called friends—and—and acquaintances—but a companion—a home friend, that is altogether different.

(Agnes kneels at the feet of the Countess, she takes her hand and presses it to her lips.)

AGNES. Dear madam, have I found the home at last that I have sought for so long? I will be a sister to you, and watch you tenderly. You are very young—and look delicate.

LADY E. I am twenty. Just think, Miss Sherwood, I have been married four years—and oh! so happy! But you must not be sad—I will cheer you.

AGNES. I will change my sombre colors, if you wish?

LADY E. Not if it distresses you. How is it that Lady Kingsly did not provide for you?

AGNES. Her income died with her. Indeed she was not wealthy. But she gave me what I value far more than money—vast experience and a thorough knowledge of the world.

LADY E. As you have been such a traveller, no doubt that you speak foreign languages.

AGNES. Several, madam!

LADY E. Delightful! Are you musical?

AGNES. I play and sing.

LADY E. I fear that I will grow too fond of you. The Earl is very jealous of my affections.

AGNES. Then you must not give him cause—on—only like me a little.
(She speaks this playfully, smiles.)

LADY E. How beautiful you are when you smile. I cannot imagine why you are single.

AGNES. (*sadly.*) It is not always beauty that wins.
(The Countess rings bell, enter footman L.)

LADY E. Tell the housekeeper I wish to see her. (*Exit footman L. D.*) My housekeeper is quite a character, Miss Sherwood. She has been in our family for years. She was my dear mother's maid. I lost both my parents when I was very young. On my marriage, I induced Julia Foxall to reside with me as my housekeeper. We seldom notice her eccentricities.

(*Enter Mrs. Foxall from centre arch. She curtsies to Countess.*)

FOXALL. I have been informed that my lady wishes to see me.

(*Curtsies again.*)

LADY E. Foxall, this is Miss Sherwood, my companion.

(*Miss Sherwood remains seated, but bows smilingly, which Foxall returns by an inclination of the head, but no curtsey.*)

LADY E. I wish you to conduct Miss Sherwood to her room; and you will kindly see that she is made comfortable.

FOXALL. All your wishes are laws, my lady. (*She curtsies.*) Will Miss Sherwood please follow me?

(*Agnes rises, and bowing gracefully to the Countess, follows Foxall centre arch and exeunt. The Countess goes toward D. R.*

LADY E. (*calling.*) Harold, Harold! have you finished your letters?

(*Enter D. R. Earl of Eglinton.*)

L. E. Yes! But you did not give me time to seal them.

LADY E. (*with enthusiasm.*) Oh, Harold! I am perfectly delighted. My companion is not alone very beautiful, but she is highly accomplished.

L. E. Dear me, Ada, what raptures. No one is beautiful in my eyes but you, my darling. I have told you so a thousand times.

LADY E. Even Foxall was struck with her beauty.

L. E. Well, well, dear! (*Impatiently.*) I have not the slightest curiosity. But as to Foxall being *struck* by anything is wonderful. I do not think she ever was struck—even when she was a little girl. Oh, yes she was, though yesterday, (*laughing.*) when your venerable grandpa—I mean his portrait—fell on her head. Oh, well, ado! You will not miss me now.

LADY E. Harold, I do believe that you are jealous.

L. E. Why? Has my complexion turned yellow?

LADY E. No!—black! You look so cross.

L. E. I do not want my little wife to be constantly thinking of her companion on the eve of my departure.

LADY E. Oh, very well! (*Counting on her fingers.*) I am to think of Harold for breakfast, Harold for luncheon, Harold for dinner.

L. E. (*laughing.*) What a little cannibal.

(*He presses her and sttrokes her hair.*)

(*The centre arch curtains are moved aside and Agnes is seen. The Earl stands with face towards the audience. Agnes, about to enter, stops.*)

I confess that I am a little jealous of the new comer.

(*Miss Sherwood starts and turns ghastly pale. She totters as if about to faint, with an effort she controls herself and remains listening, concealed by curtains.*

LADY E. Do you love me so very much?

L. E. So much, Ada, that the four years of our wedded life seems but as a day. Were I not convinced of your affection, I could not leave you.

LADY E. I never loved any other but you, dear Harold, and never will.

L. E. My own, sweet little wife, no woman can ever lure me from your side. Now, I must seal my letters, dearest.

Lady E. I will go with you, Harold.

L. E. Who is jealous now? You wish to discover if I am dispatching any love letters.

Lady E. Oh, oh, Harold! I never doubted you!

L. E. Well, dear, you shall press your lips to the seal before I use it, and the ministers will wonder what exquisite perfume I use.

(*They go to D. R. and exeunt.*)

(*Agnes comes forward excitedly.*)

Agnes. It is he—it is he! changed—Oh! so changed—but I cannot be mistaken in the voice. It rings in my ears now as it did ten years ago. It haunted me then—it haunts me now. (*Clasps her hands excitedly.*) At last—at last! I have found him. In vain I sought for Stanly Maitland, the great American doctor. No one could give me information—none knew of him. He loves her—ha, ha, ha! That baby face to hold him! She to obliterate me in his heart and mind! She to gain the life and soul of the man I could have grovelled in the dust for. His wife—ha, ha, ha!—his forever! We will see—yes—we *shall* see! Ten years of a tortured life have changed me to. Ten weary years with a smouldering volcano in my breast. The Earl of Eglinton—the English aristocrat!—how could I dream that he deceived so well. And now I have him in my power—my vengence will be great. He is my husband and yet another woman's. (*Laughing wildly.*) He is a bigamist! The most noble—the Earl of Eglinton is a bigamist! One word of mine—hurls him into a prison. One word of mine—robs him of his wife—his treasure. Ha, ha, ha!—*fiend!* Stanly Maitland, you are trapped! I am master of the position, now!

(*She walks to and fro, than goes towards D. R. She looks through curtains*)

He is at the desk—her arms are around his neck. (*Rises towering.*) Oh! how I hate her! He looks up into her face—what an expression of love. (*Covers her face with her hands.*) He never looked like that at me—it is reverence, it is respect. Their lips meet — (*She shrieks.*) I cannot bear it—I must not stay—I dare not look any longer or I will lose my senses. (*Nervously.*) And I have to be calm. He must not suspect that Jedalia, the wronged wife, is under his roof. In this change, this clever disguise, he will not recognize the broken-hearted, betrayed child whom he repudiated. Yes, I *will* be calm—I will undergo the ordeal of this meeting. I wil go to my room to recover. (*Exit centre arch, tottering.*)

(*Enter Foxall followed by Pardoe, the butler. She rings bell. Enter footman L. He takes out tray with breakfast things and exits L. Foxall and Pardoe look at each other—Advance a few steps—Stop—and so thrice fuss.*

Foxall. I don't like the looks of her, Pardoe.

Pardoe. Ah! (*Shakes his head.*)

Foxall. I am glad to hear you say so to.

Pardoe. Ugh! (*Places his hand to his brow.*)

Foxall. That's just my opinion. She's a living, breathing Mount Versurvious—that's what she is.

Pardoe. Hem! (*Places his hand on his heart and shakes his head.*)

Foxall. That's just it, Pardoe; them there red headed women gets all the fire there (*Points to head*) instead of here. (*Points to heart.*)

Pardoe. Ah!

FOXALL. I've had a dream, Pardoe—a awful dream.

PARDOE. Ah——aha——ah! (*Long drawn out.*)

FOXALL. A shipwreck, Pardoe.

PARDOE. Ugh, ugh, ugh! (*Shudders.*)

FOXALL. Yes, an' them as I love were on board. I saw 'em go down, down, down—Pardoe—to the bottom of the sea, and my lady floated by like a merrymaid, then suddingly she changed to a dark woman with black hair like Miss—Miss Sherwood's—I means the face.

PARDOE. (*pointing to head—shaking it.*) No!

FOXALL. Well, supposing her's is red now, she might 'a changed the color—die is cheap.

PARDOE. Hem, hem!

FOXALL. Ah! I understand. All the men are alike. Red hair, light hair, black hair—as long as she's young and handsome.

PARDOE. Ah! (*Rubs hands smilingly.*)

FOXALL. I tell you, that girl's face tells a history, or I'm greatly mistaken. I have'nt been ladies' maid for years without understanding the face, expression and make-up. (*Exeunt both D. L.*)

(Enter D. R. the Earl and Countess, and from centre arch Miss Sherwood. The Earl starts, looks with surprise at her beauty; expresses the same to the Countess in dumb show. The latter advances, takes Miss Sherwood's hand, presents her to the Earl)

LADY E. Harold, permit me to introduce Miss Agnes Sherwood, my companion.

(Agnes bows gracefully, the Earl returns it—remains lost in admiration.)

TABLEAU.

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.—A WIFE'S DEVOTION.

(An elapse of six months has taken place.)

SCENE.

(Same room as in Act First. Time—Evening. Enter D. L. Mrs. Foxall, followed by Pardoe carrying lamp. He places it on the table. Foxall sits down, Pardoe stands near.)

FOXALL. Well, Pardoe, I don't know if I am Julia Foxall, or my lady is my lady. Things have come to a pretty pass, upon my word.

PARDOE. Aarah! (*Raising his eyes and hands.*)

FOXALL. Six months ago *I* was somebody, *now* the companion rules the house.

PARDOE. Im—imm! (*Shakes his head.*)

FOXALL. "I can see through a millstone." I'm much mistaken if my lady don't regret ever having engaged her. She's a fine madam, she is. Why she exacts more attendance then the whole house put together.

PARDOE. Hem, hem! (*Pardoe looks dolefully around.*)

FOXALL. That's just what I say—I agree with you there. Why don't my lady send her about her business?

PARDOE. Ha! (*Elevating his eye-brows.*)

FOXALL. Do you think so?—well, the Earl ought to be ashamed of himself—his eyes are always following this red-haired woman.

PARDOE. Ugh!

FOXALL. Why, Pardoe, six months ago, when she first came—I remember the day well—for his lordship had ordered his valet to get ready for starting in a few hours. Would you believe it—after he saw her—he actually countermanded the order and stayed two days longer.

PARDOE. Ah, ah!

FOXALL. Yes he did, and tho' it was his intention to stay six weeks he returned in three. My lady was delighted, but *I* was not—I know a man's mind to well—I've been there—I'm a widow.

PARDOE. Y-e-e-e-s! (*Long drawn out.*)

FOXALL. Men are the wickedest deceptors, they are. Their minds are a sort of constitudal kaleidescop'—always on the change.

PARDOE. Ah! (*Short, purses up his mouth.*)

FOXALL. It's true, you need'nt flush up so; of cause you're ready to defend your sex—its man's natur' to. You should have seen her look of triumph at his return. Now he's been gone again five weeks—let me see—yes!

PARDOE. Hey?

FOXALL. Now don't contradict so persistantly—I say five weeks. He wrote to my lady he's stay this time is to be three months. Should'nt be surprised to see him enter even to-day——

(*Rumbling noise heard without, then a loud knocking. They both start, look off D. L.*)

Good gracious!—I must be a witch—there he is sure enough!

(*The Earl of Eglinton enters hurriedly proceeded by footman bowing, who takes the Earl's travelling cloak, hat, etc.*)

Your lordship's taken me by surprise.

(*Curtsies excitedly. Pardoe bows, places chair, stands aside.*)

Welcome, your lordship.

L. E. (*takes off gloves.*) How is Lady Eglinton, Foxall?

FOXALL. Not well, sir. She will be quite elated at your return.

L. E. Agreeably so, I trust, Foxall. (*She curtsies.*) She—she can bear my absence better now—as—as—Miss Sherwood is with her. (*Nervously.*) Of course she—she is still here?

FOXALL (*coldly.*) Yes, Sir.

L. E. (*looks delighted.*) I will change my travelling dress, then join my wife. (*Exit D. R.*)

FOXALL. Well! (*looking after him, then turning to Pardoe*). With all due respect for his lordship, he's a case.

PARDOE. Hah!

FOXALL. Just so, Pardoe. It isn't quite a century ago that on his return he would rush to my lady's room without changing his travelling gear. Come along Pardoe, and don't talk in the hall. (*Exeunt D. L.*)

(*Enter centre arch Agnes, followed by the Marquis de Lassee. She seats herself, looking at the Marquis frowningly.*)

AGNES. I have told you repeatedly, Marquis, that I do not wish you to visit me.

MARQUIS. Why? Of all the acquaintances of your former life, you ought to accord me your consideration.

(*Agnes looks round, alarmed.*)

AGNES. Hush! do not allude to the past; that lies buried in the grave—with my father! Why do you annoy me? You followed me on the Continent, you are here now. With what object? I am happily placed, my life has drifted into a peaceful calm. (*Smiles sorrowfully.*)

MARQUIS. I follow you because I love you, Jedalia. (*She looks terrified.*) I haunt this neighborhood and this house because it contains the woman I love—the one being enshrined in my heart.

AGNES. This is folly, shear folly. I cannot love you. I will not see you again. I am known here as Agnes Sherwood the Companion. In this name I live—in Jedalia Montano I am dead! (*Aside.*) In Jedalia Maitland I exist only for revenge. (*Aloud.*) Marquis, you *must* cease your visits.

MARQUIS. Did you not give me some hope when we met in Paris?

AGNES. The slightest.

MARQUIS. But on that I lived. I clung to the anchor which dragged me along until it landed me in your presence, Jedalia, dearest, it is ten years since I first beheld you; ten years since I witnessed the ceremony which gave you to another. I have inherited vast estates and a title. Don Rivero is now a man of position and character. As the Marquis De Lassee I again offer you my heart and hand; all my fortune with myself I lay at your feet, Jedalia.

AGNES. I thank you, sir, and regret that it is out of my power to reciprocate your affection. You will compromise me if you persist in calling. Besides, you seem to ignore the fact that I am a married woman.

MARQUIS. I have not forgotten that. But surely that scoundrel Stanly Maitland is no longer in existence, or he would before this have claimed the most brilliant as well as the most beautiful *(she bows)* of women. Do not lead this widowed life any longer—or this servitude.

AGNES. It is not servitude, it is independence. Marquis de Lassee, it can never be.

MARQUIS (*darkly*). I know the cause of this refusal.

AGNES (*alarmed*). You do ?

MARQUIS. Yes. I am aware that Sir George Elliot (*she smiles as if relieved*) loves you—follows you.

AGNES. He is a friend of the Earl and visits here frequently. He acts like a foolish boy.

MARQUIS. That boy will inherit a dukedom shortly, which he will offer to you.

AGNES (*coldly*). And which I will refuse.

MARQUIS (*brightly*). You will ?

AGNES. Yes.

MARQUIS. Then I can still hope on. You must permit me to visit you.

AGNES. It is impossible. (*Impatiently.*) The Earl has returned—I am but a paid servant—

(*Rings the bell. Enter footman D. L. Bows.*)

Attend this gentleman to the door.

(*Marquis de Lassee bites his lips, stops a moment; then takes his hat, bows coldly, looks at her with a steady gaze and exits L. D., followed by footman.*)

How they annoy me! Don Rivero, the witness of my accursed marriage. Should they meet, my plan of vengeance will be frustrated—and I live but for that. He has returned again—five weeks instead of three months. Ha, ha, ha! I glory in my triumph. The repudiated wife, the hated Jedalia is loved for the second time by the same man. "Twice loved!" The man who has no eyes for any other woman, only his Ada— (*Sneeringly.*) Why, I can lead this faithful husband like a poodle. (*Pauses.*) The Lady Eglington wishes to get rid of me. Her hints are clear, but I do not take them. After all, why do I hate her so; she—she is innocent of wrong. Like myself she gave her heart, her life, her soul into this man's keeping. She welcomed me with a sister's affection, and oh! I could so have loved her. (*Wrings her hands.*) But when I see them together, when his hand touches hers, I feel my better angel take wing and demons encompass my soul. Oh, God! why hast thou permitted this man to live? this man who has wrought such misery? (*Pauses.*) I will leave here. She is good and pure—I will not injure her. She treats me coldly, and I deserve it; she suspects me, and her wifely love is up in arms against me. Ah, if she knew all. (*Rises in thought.*) No, I will not injure her.

(*Goes out slowly centre arch.*)

(*Enter the Countess from D. R.*)

LADY E. So, my husband has returned. After five weeks' absence he waits to see me until he has changed his travelling dress. His unforeseen return has frustrated my plan of discharging Miss Sherwood. What is to be done? She met all my hints with shrugs and sneers. But she *must* go—of that I am determined. My husband has insisted upon her appearing

at all our receptions. She dresses superbly. From whence does she derive her resources. (*Pauses.*) Perhaps the Earl, his banker and Miss Sherwood know best. This must end, She no longer renders me the slightest service. If I request her to fetch a broth for me, she rings for the servant and orders him to do so. (*Walks to and fro agitated.*) Oh, Heaven! I am no longer mistress in my own house. I have caught my husband gazing on her with looks of adoration. This is the second time he has returned unexpectedly, without acquainting me—and alas! I am not the cause. But ah, he is not to blame; it is she who ensnares him, it is she who lures him from me.

(*Enter Earl of Eglinton. He embraces his wife coldly. Seems confused*).

L E. I trust that you are well, Ada. You see, I finished my duties quicker than I imagined, so hurried my return.

Lady E. I am glad, dear Harold, and this evening I will have you all to myself. We dine *tete-a-tete.*

L. E. Has Miss Sherwood left you?

Lady E. No.

L. E. Then it is your intention to insult her.

Lady E. (*excitedly.*) Miss Sherwood will quit my service very soon. I am quite well now, and no longer require a companion. I intend accompanying you on your next trip, dear Harold.

L. E. Did Miss Sherwood say that she wishes to leave!

Lady E. (*coldly*). No, Harold; it is *I* who dispense with her services.

L. E. (*in anger*). You should have consulted me before taking this step.

Lady E. *I* engaged her.

L. E. (*indignantly*), And *I* advised you to do so.

Lady E. She shall not remain, of this I am determined.

L. E. (*sneeringly*). Indeed?

Lady E. Yes, indeed, Harold.

L. E. We will see.

(*Exit D. R. in haste.*)

(*Enter, centre arch, Miss Sherwood.*)

Lady E. Miss Sherwood, you will please remain in your own room today. I dine alone with my husband. Your dinner will be sent up to you.

Agnes (*aside*). Her tone is insolent, it sounds a meaning insult. (*Aloud.*) You should have told me that before I dressed for dinner, madam.

Lady E. (*proudly*). It is not necessary to consult my *paid* servant—companion, I mean—as to what I should do. You have simply to obey orders.

Agnes (*superciliously*). Indeed!

Lady E. Yes. Moreover, I wish you to leave my house to-morrow.

Agnes (*arrogantly*). Indeed!

Lady E. I will pay you three months' salary in advance.

Agnes. Very generous. (*Laughs*)

Lady E. You forget yourself, Miss Sherwood. Please remember to whom you are speaking. (*Draws herself up.*)

Agnes. I do *not* forget. (*Aside.*) She is aggressive she defies me—all my good resolves are vanishing into air. (*Aloud.*) Spare yourself all controversy, madam, because I intend dining with you and the Earl.

Lady E. Your audacity is astonishing. Remember, I am the Countess of Eglinton.

Agnes (*contemptuously*). Are you?

Lady E. (*excitedly*). You will quit my house this moment.

AGNES (*with scorn*). And if I refuse?

LADY E. (*with anger*). I will have you thrust out!

AGNES (*with derision*). You!

(*Enter Foxall L. D. The Countess tries to conceal her emotion. Miss Sherwood saunters through centre arch. The Countess sinks into a chair. Foxall gazes after Miss Sherwood, then comes close to the Countess.*

FOXALL. If nettles creep into my garden and endeavor to strike root, my lady, I tear them out and fling them aside.

LADY E. But if they sting as you pluck them?

FOXALL. I take the pain philosophically and crush them under my foot.

LADY E. Ah! Foxall, I am brokenhearted.

(*She flings her arms round Foxall's neck and weeps excitedly*)

FOXALL. You need not speak, my lady; I understand all. My first impressions are confirmed. This woman seeks to wreck your life. Thwart her!

LADY E. How?

FOXALL. By discharging her.

LADY E. She will not go.

FOXALL. Hah! her quarters are too comfortable. "As you make your bed so you lie on it." And a precious soft one it is. But the feathers will smother her at last.

LADY E. What am I to do, Foxall?

FOXALL. Compel her to remain in her room.

LADY E. She defies me. The Earl— (*Stops, turns aside.*)

FOXALL (*aside*). Poor lady, she is a true wife. Even to her faithful Foxall she will not utter a word against the man she worships. (*Aloud.*) Do not permit her to dine with you. I have ordered only covers for *two*.

LADY E. She insists upon her formal privilege. I—I have been to blame. I have treated her as an equal, and now she rewards me with insolence and treachery.

FOXALL. My lady, "possession is nine points of the law," so the lawyers say; I suppose they speak from experience.

LADY E. (*with determination*). You are right, Foxall.

FOXALL. Covers for two, my lady?

LADY E. Yes.

(*Exit Countess D. R.*)

(*Foxall rings bell. Enter Pardoe L.*)

FOXALL. Pardoe, covers, for two only.

PARDOE. Oh!

FOXALL. Take no orders to the contrary.

PARDOE. Imm!

FOXALL. Send up dinner to the companion.

PARDOE. A-a-a-h!

FOXALL. *To her room.*

PARDOE. Hem!

FOXALL. And season it well—*Cayeene.*

PARDOE. Ho-o-oh!

FOXALL. There, go along, you talk too much.

(*Exeunt both D. L.*)

(*Enter Miss Sherwood, centre, laughing satirically. Seats herself.*)

AGNES. This contest is amusing. We will see who will be the conqueror. (*Rises.*)

(*Enter the Earl, hastily, D. R. He advances eagerly. He bows coldly, then turns aside.*)

L. E. Miss Sherwood—Agnes—I could not stay away from you. My life is a blank when not in your presence.

AGNES. How many times have you uttered those sentiments, and to how many women?

L. E. To several before I saw you, but not with the intense emotion which takes complete possession of me when I only think of you. Ah! do believe me.

AGNES. Believe you— I detest men! (*Pauses.*) That is, I have always detested them until— (*Breaks off suddenly.*)

L. E. Until what? Until *we* became acquainted. That is what you were going to say.

AGNES. I have confessed nothing.

L. E. But I read it in your averted face, in your beautiful eyes. Oh! that I were free. (*The Countess is seen centre arch.*) Why did we not meet before my hateful marriage.

AGNES. It is always the same with men, they covet the unattainable.

L. E. Not *unattainable*, I hope.

AGNES. How?

L. E. We could fly from here. Let us go to Spain, Russia, Italy— (*Stops confusedly.*)

AGNES. Why do you pause? Does Italy startle you?

L. E. (*confusedly*). I do not care for Italy.

AGNES. Not care for Italy? I love it. To me it is the land of romance, history and music. Art there is crowned with a halo which sparkles on the brow like the radiance of the purest brilliant. Then the scenery, the lakes. Not care for Italy! It is only the *roué*, the *gambler* who cannot perceive its beauties.

(*The Earl turns aside, but quickly recovers. Agnes turns abruptly towards him.*)

Get me a chair.

(*He quickly places one, centre.*)

L. E. I beg your pardon, loveliest of women!

(*He attempts to take her hand. She snatches it away.*)

You are offended because I permitted you to stand. I was so carried away by your beautiful description.

AGNES. If I had not asked for a chair I would have been carried away fainting. (*Imperiously.*) Why do you not like Italy?

L. E. (*hesitatingly*). I—I—was not happy there.

AGNES. Ha! Some love affair? Speak the truth, confess. (*With a smile.*) I will absolve you. I—I—will not be jealous of your past.

L. E. You love me then, my angel, my life?

(*He kneels at her feet, overcome. She looks down on him with a fierce expression. Then he gazes on her face. She smiles.*

AGNES. Well, did she resemble me?

L. E. Just the contrary. She was dark as night. I never loved her.

AGNES. Ah, truant, you say this to please me.

L. E. No, on my soul!

AGNES. Have you ever seen Dante's picture of Hades?

L. E. Yes. Why do you ask?

AGNES. Because the sufferings of souls in that descriptive region would be mere child's play to what I would inflict on you if I thought you lied.

L. E. I look into your eyes, there is where I wish to lie.

AGNES. Did you never swear to her that you loved her, as you do to me now?

L. E. Never.

AGNES. Ah, man, man! how subtle is your brain, that delicate fibres seem interwoven in the construction. And yet they are strong, these fibres; they pull, and stretch like elastic. Ha, ha, ha!

L. E. You do not believe me, then?

AGNES. Well, where I *dote* I *doubt*. *Doubtless* you think this play upon words strange, but I am nothing if not strange.

L. E. You are all that is lovely and divine in my thoughts.

AGNES. To the point. This former love?

L. E. She was a crafty woman, and with her father sought to inveigle me into a marriage. So I fled, and have never seen her since. This was ten years ago.

AGNES. What age was she? You see I am inquisitive in all appertaining to the *grande passion*.

L. E. She must have been thirty-five or therebout.

AGNES. Therebout—that leaves a wide margin.

L. E. Are you satisfied?

AGNES. Well, yes. If a woman of that age tries her arts upon a tender-hearted boy—let me see—I suppose that you were twenty-two—that gave her a start of three years. Three years in a woman's life is power, strength and development.

L. E. You speak as if you had studied in the school of anatomy.

AGNES. I *have*, but not as long as you.

L. E. (*starts visibly*). Who told you that? (*Rises.*)

AGNES. You ask this question and say you love me?

L. E. Say? I *do* love you.

(Takes her hand and kisses it. She permits him to do so.)

AGNES. Of all persons, a doctor ought to be aware of the intricate workings of the mind. You cost me months of study in and out of the school of anatomy.

L. E. How did you discover that I understood anatomy?

AGNES. Because—well, because you (*she turns aside*) interested me. I watched where you went to *some* evenings, I followed you to the school of anatomy.

L. E. You—you did this? What but love could have induced you, oh! Agnes, darling. When you were absent from the room, I could not remain. I sought the college of anatomy to distract my thoughts.

(He throws his arms around her. She endeavors to put him aside. She turns, sees the Countess looking at them with horror depicted in her face.)

AGNES (*points*). Your wife!

(The Earl remains confused. By an effort he recovers himself.

L. E. Spy! How dare you play the eavesdropper?

LADY E. Shame on you, Earl of Eglinton—degenerate, worthless man—slave of a base passion, lured to destruction by a still baser woman!

AGNES. Thanks, madam; you are very polite.

L. E. You shall not *(makes a mock curtsy)* insult Miss Sherwood.

LADY E. Can such a woman *be* insulted? Harold, she is a serpent!

AGNES. And, as a serpent, I will not alone bite the heel, but inject poison into body and soul! Earl, I wish to dine with you both this evening.

LADY E. You will not, madam.

L. E. And I say she *shall*. (*Aside.*) I must however temporise to avoid a scandal.

AGNES (*softly*). Which shall it be, Harold?

LADY E. You will have to choose between us. I will not sit at the same table with that woman.

L. E. Madam, your conduct deserves the highest censure. (*With hatred in his voice.*) You are jealous, madam, groundlessly jealous. I was simply rehearsing a play with Miss Sherwood—which your foolish suspicions marred.

AGNES. Yes, madam; a play which has yet to be elucidated. The plot is very ingeniously contrived, and *I* play the leading role. (*To the Earl.*) May I request you to withdraw for a short time, sir? Do not return until I ring for you. I wish to convince the Countess what a mistake she is making.

L. E. (*aside*). I quite rely upon her ingenuity to get me out of this scrape. She is a glorious woman. (*Exit centre arch.*)

(The Countess sinks into a seat, overcome. Agnes stands proudly looking at her.)

AGNES. Madam, a few moments ago you asked: "Can such a woman be insulted?" I will answer you in a few words. *I* am the wife of Harold—*you* are his mistress!

(The Countess leaps from her chair.)

LADY E. You—you the wife of Harold!

AGNES. This house, his lands, his chattels belong to me—to me!

LADY E. Great God! (*Clasps her hands.*) Explain, if you would not have me fall dead at your feet.

AGNES. At a word of mine, (*in a hissing whisper*) to-morrow would see him in jail a bigamist!

LADY E. My husband—the Harold I so love a bigamist!

AGNES (*mockingly.*) Call the servants, reiterate your orders—covers for *two*.

LADY E. Are you a woman or demon? How can you torture me so?

AGNES. I am a woman transformed into a fiendish, abhorrent thing; but he, your husband, made me so. Your husband—ah, ah, ah! Your husband.

LADY E. Oh, horror! (*Covers her face with her hands.*)

AGNES. What if in revenge of your treatment I call in the officers of justice? What if instead of covers for *two* he will dine in a common jail, with felons for company—with a hundred more malefactors—at a wooden table, with wooden spoons as an accompaniment to the exquisite repast; with—

LADY E. Mercy! mercy! (*Falls on her knees.*) Do not harm him. I will do all that you request me to do. Oh! be merciful. I do not know the circumstances. I—I cannot understand why he does not recognize you. But I entreat you, as you are a woman—by the love you once felt for him, do not expose his name to contempt. (*Sobs at her feet.*)

AGNES. My disguise is too perfect for him to penetrate it. He left me an innocent, confiding child; he will find me an outraged, revengeful woman. You will no longer ask: "Can such a woman be insulted?"

LADY E. I confess that I have wronged you deeply, but be merciful and spare him.

AGNES. Which shall it be, covers for three or exposure?

(Waits with folded arms.)

(The Countess rises.)

LADY E. Miss Sherwood, pray, dine with the Earl, but permit me to retire.

AGNES (*in a cold voice.*) Covers for three or not?

LADY E. I will be obedient towards you as a slave. I will attend and consult your every wish, as if *I* were the companion and you the Countess.

AGNES (*proudly.*) I *am* the Countess!

LADY E. Only shield him, my Harold, my love!

AGNES. Enough of this. Covers for three or not?

LADY E. (*sighing deeply.*) Yes.

AGNES. Dry your tears.

LADY E. (*humbly*). I will.

AGNES. Ring the bell.

LADY E. Yes. (*She rings the bell.*)

AGNES. Give your orders to the housekeeper in my presence.

(Enter Mrs. Foxall centre.)

FOXHALL ((*curtsies*). What would my lady please to want?

LADY E. (*calmly*). Covers for three, if you please, Foxall.

FOXALL. For *three*, my lady?

LADY E. For three, Foxhall.

(Agnes rings bell. Enter centre, Earl; looks from one to the other.)

Harold, give your arm to Miss Sherwood.

(The Earl does so. Foxall looks amazed. Agnes smiles triumphantly.)

L. E. (*aside*). I wonder by what magic power she has calmed the storm.

TABLEAU.

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.—A Sensational Story.

SCENE.

(An elegant room with pillars festooned. At back, steps with crimson carpets leading into ball-room and corridor. Furniture crimson and gilt. Vases with flowers. The whole room superbly decorated. As the curtain rises Foxall and Pardoe are discovered arranging and dusting. Opening music lively. The housekeeper sits down with a discontented face.)

Foxall. Pardoe.

Pardoe. Hey?

Foxall. I am misirable.

Pardoe. A-a-a-h!

Foxall. There is something dreadful going on—of that I'm sartain.

Pardoe. Imm!

Foxall. My lady is very unhappy.

Pardoe. Ah!

Foxall. The companion is master.

Pardoe. Hem!

Foxall. What do you think?

Pardoe. Hem!

Foxall. That's just my opinion, Pardoe. I do not care to say what's in my mind—no more do you.

Pardoe. No!

Foxall. Do you think her so handsome?

Pardoe. Himm! (*Nods approval.*)

Foxall. Oh, you do! You need'nt make such a fuss about it.

Pardoe. Im!

Foxall. You're all alike, you men—caught by her red hair. If that's not a sign of the fire of evil in her heart, why, my name is'nt Foxall.

Pardoe. Ah!

Foxall. Well I'm glad you give into that, although you need'nt be so violent about it. You're the noisest, fussiest man I ever saw. (*Bell rings outside.*) I must be off and give final orders. (*Exeunt D. L.*)

(Enter from R. W. the Countess beautifully dressed. Comes slowly centre.)

Lady E. A week has passed since the terrible disclosure. What am I? and why do I remain here? His mistress! It is not true—it cannot be. Shall I consult my lawyer?—oh, no, no! I dare not! "One whisper, one word of this to anyone hurls Harold into a prison!" so she threatened. Perhaps she is deceiving me? (*Pauses.*) No! her words were too earnest for that. Unhappy woman—what revenge is she contemplating? My Harold, my husband, is again fascinated by her—"twice loved" by him. Oh, how wretched I am! But why did he forsake her? Shall I ever unravel this mystery?

(*Enter Miss Sherwood splendidly dressed. She comes from corridor R. W. and descends centre steps. She advances proudly and sits.*)

AGNES. Rise. (*The Countess does so.*) I forbid you to sit in my presence.

LADY E. Is there any other degradation that you wish me to submit to?

AGNES. I commanded you not to go near my husband—he belongs to me—do you hear?—*I* have a prior claim.

LADY E. (*sadly.*) True love does not seek for revenge—true love finds excuses for the loved one's faults.

AGNES. Woman, do not arouse the slumbering fire within me, or it will consume us both. Take care, or I will make you stoop now——

(*Enter the Earl R. W.*)

LADY E. To conquer afterwards!

(*Picks up lace handkerchief which Agnes had dropped, hands it.*)

AGNES. You see, my lord, how very kind the Countess is. (*Aside.*) You will repent this. I desire you to come to my room to-night and attend me in the place of my maid.

(*Agnes places her hand on the Earl's arm, who gazes at her completely fascinated. They saunter into the ball room. Countess looks at them.*)

LADY E. Not! one word for me, not one look. She has bewitched him! And I have to receive the guests, to act the happy hostess—to play a conventional lie! (*Exit into ball room.*)

(*Distant music heard in ball room. Enter, R., Miss Sherwood. She comes down steps slowly. Sits down, leaning head on her hand.*)

AGNES. What a life is mine! Dress, brilliants, admiration. Mine by right years ago, my love for this man must have turned to aversion. Once so loved, now detested. (*Pauses.*) Am I certain of that? Is it hatred, or—or jealousy? Oh! no, no! I do not love him. It is impossible—it cannot be. (*Pauses.*) And yet why does his touch send such a thrill of rapture through me? I tremble when he is near me—I fly at his approach. His kisses burn my hands like liquid fire. And she, this woman—his wife—if she dares to lay her hand on his, I will murder her! (*Shudders.*) Great heaven! am I mad? (*Tearfully.*) Oh! Stanly Maitland, my first, my only love forsworn—liar, faithless *roué*—yet still my only love. What if I discover myself to him—His love for me now might turn to hatred.

(*Walks to and fro, then stops.*)

I saw her yesterday kneeling beside him in the conservatory. They were not aware of my presence—I was concealed by exotics whose perfumes seemed to turn into poison the air I breathed. She took his hand and pressed it to her lips—I had forbidden her to touch him. And he—he—looked kindly at her. Perfidious wretch, how dare he! (*In an exhausted tone.*) But this is not love—no! it is hatred! Jedalia, remember your oath.

(*Enter L. the Marquis de Lassee. He stands looking at her with admiration. She sees him and starts.*)

How came you here? At whose invitation?

MARQUIS. At Sir George Elliot's.

AGNES. You must not stay—I entreat you.

MARQUIS (*surprised*). Why not?

AGNES. I—I—will explain some other time.

MARQUIS. I made the acquaintance of Sir George so that he might introduce me to the Earl, and this would give me the *entrée* of the house and I could see you sometime.

AGNES. But you will leave if I request you to do so—will you not?

MARQUIS. I would do anything to win a smile or kind word from you, Jedalia. But there must be some great cause for this agitation—perhaps a rival. I will discover whom I have to dread.

AGNES (*rising*). Marquis—Rivero! (*Places her hand on his arm, prevents him going.*) I—I do not wish you to go to the ball room. (*He looks at her, fascinated.*) I fear some danger, and I will not have you suffer, that is all. (*Aside.*) If I could but induce him to leave before they meet. (*Aloud.*) You will depart to please me, Rivero?

MARQUIS. What would I not do for your sake, loveliest of women! You called me Rivero—that name from your lips has a double charm, now.

AGNES (*with suppressed terror*). But go—go at once!

MARQUIS. You permit me to hope, then? Say yes, Jedalia, and I leave a happy man.

AGNES (*looking round*). Oh! how you torture me! You see how agitated I am. (*Aside.*) If they meet, Harold is lost! (*Aloud.*) I will see you again—in two days—in one-to-morrow! Only go now!

MARQUIS. I will obey you, Jedalia, and rely on your promise, dearest.

(*Enter at back from ball room the Earl. He stands transfixed.*)

Sweetest of women, until to-morrow adieu.

(*He kisses her hand and goes off L. W. The Earl comes near.*)

L. E. (*speaks angrily*). Who is that gentleman who just departed, may I ask?

AGNES. I have yet to learn your right to question me. (*Laughs to conceal agitation.*)

L. E. My love for you gives me the right.

AGNES. Your love. (*With contempt.*) Bah! you do not understand the sacred name of love. What man does?

L. E. Agnes, you will drive me frantic!

AGNES. Coquetting is woman's privilege. It is our only weapon against man. (*Enter Sir George from ball room.*)

Ah! Sir George, you are late; but I have reserved a dance for you.

SIR G. Miss Sherwood—might I—ah—have the honor—ah—supremely happy—ah— Thought the ball room—ah—dark without your presence. You—ah—light up everything—everybody.

AGNES (*taps him with the fan*). That pretty speech deserves a waltz. *Allons, monsieur.*

SIR G. *Oui, mademoiselle.*

(*They pass into ball room, the Earl following in a jealous rage*)

(*Enter, L. W., the Marquis de Lassee. He looks about cautiously, seeks a place of concealment*)

MARQUIS. There is more in this than I can fathom. She wished to get me away—that is quite evident. When I think of her mysterious agitation, I wonder I could be such a fool to believe it was for my sake. I do not hold myself bound in honor to play into her hands. In whom is she so interested? and *for* whom her excitement? How I love her! But I

will discover her secret. (*Looks round.*) Where can I conceal myself? Ah! here!

(*Draws a screen, near back of stage. Places chair, sits; places screen before him.*)

(*Enter from ball-room the Countess, the Honorable Miss Skeggs, and several ladies beautifully dressed, they sit on ottomans, sofas, chairs.*)

SKEGGS. Hem! My lady, just look at all the men running after the companion. There are those in the room much better looking. "To make my story short,"—men are fools.

LADY E. (*gently.*) Miss Sherwood is very attractive. (*The Countess sighs.*)

SKEGGS. To much so. (*Sniffing.*) "To make short of my story," some people will never learn wisdom. Had I been in your place, I would have thought *twice* before engaging her.

LADY E. (*Aside.*) She is right, I have brought this misery upon myself. (*Aloud.*) You dance do you not, Miss Skeggs?

SKEGGS. (*spitefully.*) Of course I do, but I am not asked. "To make short of my story," I hav'nt got red hair I don't expose my neck and arms.

LADY E. (*sidea.*) No, she is too bony and her skin too leathery.

(*Ladies laugh. aside.*)

SKEGGS. My goodness! (*Looks off.*) how she flirts. Just look at her. "To make short of my story," her head is almost on Sir George's shoulder. Ugh! (*She shudders, lifts up her hands.*)

(*Enter from ball-room Sir George and Miss Sherwood followed by several other gentlemen. Earl follows hurriedly. Agnes staggers, places hand to brow —she looks wildly round. Gentlemen gather about her—proffer assistance. Sir George brings glass of water. Ladies look on with envy.*)

SIR G. I I am so sorry, Miss Sherwood; it—it—is my fault. Ah—I kept up the waltz to long—ah—you dance so—ah—devinely—pon honor, ah—could dance with you—ah—to the end of my life.

L. E. (*sarcastically.*) Ladies who indulge in round dances, envariably end in fainting on their partner's shoulder. It is romantic and sensational.

SKEGGS. I don't think so. "To make short of my story." it's scarcely decent.

AGNES. I regret that I have disturbed this pleasant evening. I—I was overcome by the heat. Have you a *vinaigrette*, my lady?

LADY E. Yes, Miss Sherwood. (*Hands it.*)

AGNES. Thanks, madam, you are very kind.

SKEGGS (*drawn out*). Ah! "To make short of my story," too much politeness.

(*Miss Sherwood is seated centre, Earl and Countess R., the rest grouped round.*)

AGNES. Speaking of the sensational reminds me of extraordinary occurrences one hears. I was told of a strange one, from life.

SIR G. Ah, do relate it, Miss Sherwood. It must be—ah—interesting—ah—coming from your—ah—lips.

AGNES. What flattery. (*She laughs gaily.*) I wonder if I would receive such compliments were I plain-looking and——

SKEGGS. In a different house, she was going to say. I should think not. "To make short of my story," she would be nil.

(*This is said as an aside, but is heard by all. They laugh.*)

AGNES. I reiterate. Were I as plain—as plain—as Miss Skeggs for instance—— (*All laugh.*) To be sure, *she* is an honorable, which I am not. But as an offset there is my youth against Miss Skeggs' age. I should imagine her to be on the shady side of sixty. (*Pretends suddenly to see her.*) Dear me! I hope the honorable Skeggs has not heard what I said.

(*She raises her glasses and looks at her*)

SKEGGS. Yes, I did. (*Snappishly.*) I don't mind it from a nobody. "To make short of my story," I'll go.

(*All laugh as she exits L.*)

OMNES. The story! the story!

AGNES. Remember, it positively happened—so I was informed. I dramatized it.

L. E. You add this talent to the many you possess.

LADY E. Perhaps you *act* also, Miss Sherwood?

AGNES (*bows sarcastically*). I have the honor. I frequently played the leading rôles in Lady Kingsly's amateur theatricals.

SIR G. Miss Sherwood, you are—ah—superb. (*Raises his glasses*)

AGNES. Ladies, the gentlemen are determined to make an admirable crighton of me. I will relate the story if the Countess will permit me.

LADY E. Certainly, Miss Sherwood.

AGNES. A gentleman of wealth aged fifty formed the acquaintance of a young man of twenty-five. He was poor, but talented. They became inseparable friends. The younger one was named— (*pauses*) Stanly. (*The Earl starts*) Let me see—yes—Stanly—that is correct. He shared all the wealth of the elder, and in return betrayed an innocent child of fifteen—his friend's daughter. (*The Earl looks pale as death. The Countess gazes at him, raises her eyes to heaven*). With pistols levelled at his head, the betrayer was compelled to redeem her honor by marrying her. (*The Marquis de Lassee is seen listening.*) The newly wedded pair and the father were left in the room. The witnesses of this ill-starred marriage departed. (*With excitement.*) And now was enacted a scene of horror! Stanly repudiated his young wife and exposed the character of her father to the loving child; he called him gambler, *roué*, and forger. She had believed him an honorable gentleman. The father, in his despair, placed a pistol to his head and fired. The cowardly villain who was the cause of this misery fled. For a few hours the murdered father still lingered. With the strength of the bitterest hatred he hurled malediction and curse upon curse on Stanly's head. The words he uttered were (*she rises with excitement*): "May he be cursed in all he undertakes; may he writhe as I do now in my dying agony. May everyone and everything belonging to him share the curse I now hurl at him! May he die a childless man; may those he trusts in most deceive him. May he, bereft of wife, children, friends, die homeless, hopeless, despairing!

(*She raises her eyes to heaven and extends her arms with dramatic force. The Countess utters a shriek and falls senseless at Agnes' feet. The Earl stoops over her to conceal his agitation. The Marquis comes forward, grasps Agnes' hand. The rest group.*)

MARQUIS. I know your secret.

TABLEAU.

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT IV.—THE COLLEGE OF ANATOMY.

SCENE.

A room in the College of Anatomy. Furniture dark. All the appointments sombre. Table, with lamp burning. Large lounge at back, centre. Room wainscoted dark. Book-case L., near second groove. Time, evening. Marquis de Lassee enters D. R. with key. He looks round, then advances, looks at his watch. An elapse of one week has taken place. Slow music.

MARQUIS. Eight o'clock. She is not punctual. Well, I have obeyed her orders. What greater sacrifice can she demand at my hands? I have placed myself in the power of the law for her sake— (*Listens.*) She is coming.

(He goes quickly to D. R., unlocks it. Enter Jedalia in large cloak and veiled. He assists her in removing them. She sinks into a chair, looking wildly round, sighing deeply.)

I thought that you would never come.

AGNES *(hard).* Did you?

MARQUIS. Our appointment was seven o'clock. You are an hour beyond time.

AGNES. Never expect punctuality in a woman. Ha, ha, ha! A woman, a "will o' the wisp," whose mind is a flight of birds, now scudding here, now there; a woman, whom the "first created" designate a March wind, an April shower, a lightning's flash, a stream of rapids—untenable, unrestrainable. Expect punctuality, expect honesty—expect anything from changeable woman!

MARQUIS. Jedalia!

AGNES. I tell you, Marquis—and lay it well to your heart—this ever-flitting summer puff, this stream of rapids—woman—possesses hidden rocks, devastating shoals, and storms of so fierce a nature, of so terrible a power that the strongest ship called "man" is wrecked and swept away by her!

MARQUIS. Jedalia, have I not proved my love for you? I swear——

AGNES *(holds up her hand).* Do not swear, or I will *hate* you. *He* swore that he loved me, years ago; he was at my feet, uttering oath upon oath; vow upon vow issued from his lips. And yet he lied. Did he not swear, a week ago, that he loved me to adoration? Still *he* and that woman, his wife, thrust me from their house. (*She rises.*)

MARQUIS. Yes, the coward! He feared the world's scandal, the exposure. When the Countess recovered her senses and wished to leave his house, then he began to tremble and sacrificed his love now, as he did years ago.

AGNES *(hard and stern.)* Yes, Marquis, and sent me a note written by her expelling me from the house. *She*, this woman, did this. (*Clenching her hand.*) And the cowardly villain acquiesced. Forsworn then, doubly

forsworn now. (*Takes note from her pocket.*) Here is a private note from him, "unsigned." ha, ha, ha! Unsigned! Ah, brave first created, first thought of. What would a woman have done under the circumstances? Position, money, honors, the world's scathing condemnation, all, all would have dwarfed to the merest spec in her mind. But love, the clinging of a true heart to the object of her adoration—the ignoring of self, the sharing either joy or sorrow with the loved object—in fact, the complete surrender of heart and soul, would have been the result. And yet man—noble man—is the "first created!" (*Pauses.*) Enough of this. I have work to do. My one thought: Revenge upon him, upon her!

Marquis. And if I assist you in this, you will not break your word with me?

Agnes (*coldly*). No.

Marquis. Remember, Jedalia, I sacrifice honor—a *Spaniard's* honor—for your love. I do so willingly, without one moment's hesitation, for your sake. For years I followed you and watched over your welfare. When no trace could be found of the fortune which your father asserted he possessed, when deserted in your hour of misery by the man who ought to have shielded you from bitter sneers and the world's contempt for the gambler's daughter, *I* never changed towards you. The love which entered my heart when I first beheld you will ever be yours.

Agnes. Generous man. (*Giving him her hand which he presses to his lips.*) I—I am wrong in condemning all men, for you have indeed proved an exception. Your influence with your sister placed me with lady Kingsly—this secured protection for the despised forger's daughter. It is to you I owe all my ten years of calm. Why is a woman's heart so strangely constituted? Why cannot I return your love?

Marquis. I will wait patiently, the love will come.

Agnes. But I am that man's wife. If he has committed perjury, am I to sink to his level? Marquis, your love would turn to hate.

Marquis. Do not fear, Jedalia; my life is worthless without you. I have laid all my hopes upon the altar of your love. To me it is a sacred baptism.

Agnes (*resignedly*). Well, let it be so. (*He kisses her hand.*) I will read the Earl's last letter to me:

"My darling Agnes—I am wretched without you, the light of my life is suddenly darkened. Let me convince you again and again that it was the wisest step for you to take—namely in leaving my house. My wife in her excitement would have betrayed us both. I feared for your sake, my love." (*Looking up from the letter*). Coward! "As you suggested, dearest, we will meet at the college of anatomy; there we can talk uninterruptedly. The plea study. I will be there at the appointed time. My wife is now quite calm, tho' terribly prostrated; the doctor says *that she may die.*"

(*Looks up again*). The last words are underlined and have a fearful significance. (*Speaks as if to herself.*) And I loved this heartless, selfish man. Why, he would cast *me* aside like a worn-out glove, if he tired of me. And *she*, this woman, knowing my secret power, expelled me from the house. The servants gloried at my disgrace—I could read it in their faces. Foxall, who brought the note, with an insolence that could not be mistaken, waited for an answer. (*Takes out note and reads*):

"Madam—If you do not instantly leave my house on the receipt of this, I will call in an officer of the police and have you expelled.

"Signed: Countess of Eglinton."

(*Folds note.*) She defies me. She does not believe me. Has she revealed to Harold who I am? (*Pauses.*) No, or he would not be here to-night. She

still fears me. (*Footsteps heard without.*) They are coming, marquis. (*Aside.*) My vengeance will be terrible! Then, welcome death. I have no wish to live. (*Aloud.*) Marquis, I rely on your promise. You will remain in an adjoining room -you will not interfere, whatever may occur, unless I ring the bell.

MARQUIS (*Looks off door R.*) I will do so. Hush! My scheme has worked well. I do not know your intention—I do not seek to know. I have performed *my* part of the compact and depend upon yours.

(She gives him her hand. He kisses it and exits D. L. She quickly puts on a mask, a slouched hat and man's cloak. Hurried music. Enter D R. two men bearing a human form. They are masked Agnes points to sofa. They place body on it, bow and exit. She throws off cloak and hat and puts mask aside, then sinks on chair. The body is the Countess of Eglinton, covered by a black cloth. Agnes rises, moves away cloth.

AGNES (*gazes at her*). Here am I alone with my hated rival. The Marquis has performed his task well. He has surmounted obstacles with a daring that only a Spaniard could have achieved. He spurs my love. Is that love worth such risks? No! But he does not think so. How calm is this sleep—this semblance of death! Twin sister of an unknown world, can she hear me and yet not speak? Does she know the fate awaiting her? If so, no horror that may happen can equal her sufferings. What do I intend? Is it murder? Ah, no, no! on his head may the penalty fall. (*Shuddering.*) He will be her assassin! No! He shall *strike*, but not kill! Supposing the knife slips and—and— Oh! I cannot do it. Yet the idea is grand—it is horrible in its fascination. But it would be a stupendous revenge. (*She walks to and fro excitedly, then stops.*) The cowardly betrayer of two innocent women, the attempted murderer of his wife, to be cited publicly in court, and *I* to be a witness against him. His letters to me would condemn him. The man who fears the world's scathing to be branded a murderer! Oh! (*Pauses.*) In my heart of hearts, I love him still. Why do I seek such ignominy for him? (*Softly.*) He loves me. It is *she*, his wife, who thrust me forth, who was merciless, although she was aware of my sad story. *Pauses.*) No! I will not harm him. She shall never return to him again. I will take her away to some foreign convent. She shall never be heard of again. I will call the Marquis, he shall remove her before Stanly arrives. I cannot harm him—or her—I cannot!

(She raises cloth and is about to cover the Countess' face, when she slowly rises into a sitting position and looks at Agnes who starts back and recedes to the other side of the room. The Countess' eyes still follow Agnes' movements, staring, struggling to speak At last she utters a shriek and convulsively shudders. Agnes rushes towards her, places her hand on the Countess' mouth, stifling her cries. A struggle ensues.

Hush! One word and I will kill you. (*Aside.*) The men have bungled in their work -she has not inhaled sufficient chloroform. (*Aloud.*) Be silent! You are in my power, madam.

LADY E. Have mercy! What harm have I done? (*Clasps her hands, looking round with fear.*) I never injured you, Miss Sherwood?

AGNES (*bitterly*). You drove me from your house.

LADY E. (*with suprise*). I?

AGNES. Yes, you. You knew my story and that I alone had the just right to remain there.

LADY E. Ah! Agnes, believe me, I am innocent of your sudden expulsion. I could not have acted so basely towards you after that revelation at the reception.

AGNES. Woman, would you dare to lie with such a fate before you?

LADY E. Where am I?

AGNES. In a private dissecting room of the college of anatomy.

LADY E. Great heaven!

AGNES. Answer me one question. If you prevaricate, if you lie, your blood be upon your own head.

LADY E. I will speak the truth as heaven is my judge!

AGNES (*takes letter from pocket*). Did you write this letter and send it by Foxall to me?

LADY E. (*looking at it*). No, on my soul!

AGNES. Is not this your handwriting?

LADY E. An excellent imitation, but nevertheless a forgery. (*With sudden terror*). I see it all now. Harold has decived me— (*Feels in her pocket*). I remember. (*Excitedly.*) A letter dropped from Harold's pocket. It was open—I read it. It was a copy of one he had sent to Foxall. The poor woman must have been suborned to do this, believing her master in earnest. I was going to place it before him, but I—my insensibility— Oh! read it.

AGNES (*reads*).

"Foxall,

"This detestable woman, Agnes Sherwood, must be driven from the house. She is wicked to the heart's core, and has led me on to forget my duty to my dear wife, of which I am heartily ashamed. Go to Agnes with this note enclosed (*I* wrote it, imitating the Countess' handwriting) and expel her as quickly as possible. I select you, as I am aware of your faithful attachment to my wife. I will be thankful to be rid of this shameless adventuress."

Great God! (*Aside.*) And for this man I would have committed any deed, however base; and she (*looking at her with compassion*) is as great a victim as I am. (*Aloud.*) Countess, I read this man's motive. He wished to lure me into his power, to ruin me; for in his house he feared suspicion might be his destruction. Now, madam, read his letter to me. (*Gives it.*)

LADY E. (*reads, then looks up*). Perjured, base man! My love for him is turning to aversion. Is that story related at the reception really yours?

AGNES (*with drooping head*). Yes, madam.

LADY E. You married Stanly Maitland, now the Earl of Eglinton, in the presence of witnesses?

AGNES. I did.

LADY E. You can prove this?

AGNES (*takes certificate from case in pocket*). Here are proofs of my marriage.

LADY E. (*reads*). Jedalia Montano Maitland. (*Bursts into tears*). There is not a redeeming point in that man's character. (*Rises.*) Forgive me, most injured of women! From the expression on the Earl's face, at the recital of that story, I read his guilty soul and shrunk from him. I had resolved to leave him—I now resign the position which is your right.

AGNES. And which I refuse to accept. (*Falls at the feet of the Countess.*) Pardon me, I entreat—I—

LADY E. Rise, Agnes, I have nothing to forgive; it is *I* who should be at your feet, for I doubted all that you told me at first. My love for that wicked man blinded my judgment.

AGNES. You do not know the dark designs against you which have lain buried in my heart. You will spurn me when I tell you. I had you chloroformed and brought here. A servant in your house was bribed and—

LADY E. I remember— (*places hand to brow*) a stranger entering—a cloth placed upon my mouth—and—oblivion.

AGNES. Do you know why I had you conveyed here?

LADY E. (*terrified*). No, oh, no!

AGNES. To lure him on to dissect your supposed dead body, to allow him to draw blood, then stop him, uncover the face, call the police and have him arrested. That was my intended revenge on you both!

LADY E. Oh! how terrible. (*Turns from her, shuddering.*)

AGNES. Aye! turn from me. (*Rises.*) It was a diabolical suggestion of revenge issuing from a maddened brain. But I swear to you that no further harm to you was intended beyond a mere scratch. I have confessed all.

LADY E. (*solemnly*). Agnes Sherwood, thank heaven that you have been spared from committing so great a crime. In contemplating this fearful revenge you might have become a participant in that of murder. Your sufferings, your love for that man and your great wrongs plead for you in my heart. We have both been urged into feelings of animosity towards each other by our love for this infamous man. You, with your Italian nature, saw only annihilation. I, with my colder English blood, still cherished a feeling of hatred towards you. Agnes Sherwood, sister in suffering, come to my heart! As heaven is my judge, I truly forgive you.

(*She opens her arms. Agnes, with a cry, rushes near and sinks at her feet, sobbing.*)

AGNES. I—I—do not deserve this kindness. Ah! see me at your feet, with all the dark passions of my soul swept away by your goodness. I will quit this place forever, but before I leave let me convince you of the utter worthlessness of the man who has tortured our hearts. I expect him here every moment.

LADY E. (*rising*). I will go at once.

AGNES. I entreat you to hear me.

LADY E. I—I—cannot stay.

AGNES. Madam, if you have any faith in my repentance, listen to me.

(*Rings bell. Enter Marquis, L. D.*)

LADY E. The Marquis de Lassee!

Agnes. This gentleman, formerly Don Rivero, was present at my marriage. Speak, Marquis de Lassee, who is the Earl of Eglinton?

Marquis. Stanly Maitland, the supposed American doctor. One moment, Jedalia. Before I left my house, several letters were brought to me. As I had no time to read them, I did so whilst awaiting your summons.

Agnes. Do not waste time, Marquis, the Earl may come at any moment.

Marquis. Stay, Jedalia. In one of those letters I find that the fortune your father spoke of was a sum in bank-notes and gold of a hundred thousand pounds, which Stanly converted to his use. With this sum he paid off the mortgage on the estate which he inherited. Your father had trusted him entirely, and Stanly invested it for him, but in his Stanly's right name of Harold, Earl of Eglinton. With difficulty I traced this and rejoice for your sake.

Lady E. Ah, wretched, worthless schemer! I congratulate you, Jedalia, Countess of Eglinton, you will obtain justice at last.

Agnes *sadly*. I will not touch one shilling of this money. It has been melted from the hearts of hundreds—nay, thousands. It has been beaten from the agonies of the ruined—from weeping wives and perishing children. It has been dipped in the tears of the aged and is the life's blood of the promising young. It is the accumulation of the gambler's profits from the despair of the once happy. And I, the gambler's daughter, will have none of it! (*She draws herself up proudly, then raises her eyes to heaven.*)

Marquis. You are a noble woman, Jedalia. But the betrayer and embezzler will have to answer to me for his fraudulent acts.

Lady E. (*sadly*). Leave him and his acts to heaven. I fear his soul is utterly lost.

Agnes. He is heartless and soulless. One moment! (*Listen.*) I hear him coming. This last discovery convinces me that he will stop at nothing. I must unmask him to you more completely. Marquis, draw the couch near. (*He does so.*) I implore you to place yourself on this couch. (*Lady E. does so.*) I will place this cover over you. You will hear more in this interview between the Earl and myself than you dream of. Marquis, conceal yourself behind that curtain.

Lady E. Jedalia, be merciful.

Agnes. Do not fear, gentle, forgiving woman; he is safe from me.

(Key turns in lock. Enter hurriedly the Earl. He advances hastily towards Jedalia, as if to embrace her. She waves him back).

Past nine o'clock. I have waited two hours for you.

L. E. My darling, I was detained by a debate. You are cold towards me because of the conduct of my hateful wife. She wrote that letter that robbed me of your presence. I could have killed her.

Agnes. If you love me as much as you say you do, why do you not rid yourself of her? There are a thousand ways to ensure her silence.

L. E. I must proceed cautiously, Agnes. I am a peer of the realm and must not be suspected. I know of a subtle poison that enters the body, secretes itself in its various meshes and leaves no trace behind. I see that you have a subject there (*points to sofa*). I will illustrate its workings. In one week's time—I will commence with small doses—in two weeks she will be dead. Then we will meet abroad and be united forever.

AGNES. It is a carefully concocted plan.

L. E. I am glad that you approve of it my angel. In the meantime, whilst all work swell, you will permit me to visit you. I will engage a beautiful villa for you, not far from London. We can there enjoy each other's society, away from my miserable home.

AGNES. Perhaps you would then treat me as you did the Italian woman who inveigled you, or wished to. Do you know, Harold, I met the gentleman who told me that story about Stanly, and which drove the Countess nearly into a fit?

L. E. *(confusedly.)* What story? I—

AGNES. What a poor memory you have—very bad for a peer of the realm who aspires to be England's future minister.

L. E. (*pretending to recollect*). Ah, that? The silly, jealous fool. She envied your talents and ruined my plans of keeping you as her companion. I feel murder in my heart towards her if I only think of it.

AGNES. The gentleman told me that this Stanly not only repudiated the wife, but stole all her money. What a clever man! Such talents are born to govern.

L. E. (*elated*). Do you think so? And you, Agnes, are worthy to be such an one's wife. We will unite in grand projects, and you shall reign as a queen!

AGNES. Supposing I demand a great sacrifice at your hands?

L. E. I will do it.

AGNES. Good.

L. E. Ah! Agnes, let me but press you to my heart for one moment. (*Advances.*)

AGNES. Stop! I have a subject here that I wish you to operate upon. It has cost me an immensity of trouble to bring her here.

(*She turns on lamp and removes the cloth from the Countess' face. He starts back with surprise and horror. The Countess remains quiet, apparently dead.*)

L. E. The Countess dead!

AGNES. Not dead, only chloroformed.

L. E. Agnes, what is the meaning of this? How came she here?

AGNES. I brought her—that is, I caused her to be brought. I am jealous of her and your constant vows of love to her.

E. L. Only a cloak to conceal my designs. What do *you* intend by this?

AGNES. *You* wrote that note of dismissal from your house—*you* sent it by Foxall.

L. E. *(confused)*. But—but at her instigation. She swore that she would betray you Fearing her mad action, I complied. Agnes, I only love you.

AGNES. Prove it by striking her to the heart. She is dead to all pain.

L. E. Yes, you are right. I *hate* her—to obtain you I will rid myself of this incumbus. We will share the crime and the reward together. I can assert that a subject was brought—that I did not notice the face—that I dissected. Thus I escape suspicion.

(He selects knife from book-case. Hurried music. As he advances near the couch, the Countess slowly rises, points at him. He stands transfixed with horror.)

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LADY E. Cowardly asssassin! wretch unworthy t[illegible] have heard all. Fly from here whilst there is yet t[illegible] affection in my heart for you is erased. Your presence fills me with loathing.

AGNES (*with contempt*). Stanly Maitland, you are trapped. (*He stares at her wildly.*) Did you imagine that wickedness such as yours would go unpunished? At a word of mine the gallows would be your doom—or transportation for life, chained to other murderous felons--beaten, filled with loathsome disease. Such will be your fate. I will denounce you, would-be murderer!

(*L. E. falls on his knees, waving off the words of Agnes. He stares wildly from one to the other, then turns aside, takes a small bottle from his breast and drinks the contents.*

But no! Live on, wander on earth from place to place, like another Cain. (*She raises her hands*). May he die a childless man. May those he trusts in most deceive him. May he be bereft of wife, of all, and die homeless, hopeless—despairing!

(*She rises in grandeur. Marquis de Lassee comes near. The Earl starts, rises, looks at him.*)

L. E. Don Rivero! All is over. (*Suddenly.*) Who are you, diabolical woman? (*Aside.*) Ah! the poison works. (*Aloud.*) You lured me on--(*Writhes.*) You—who are you?

AGNES. Your wife, Jedalia!

(*The Earl attempts to speak. Suddenly reels and falls dead at Jedalia's feet. They all gaze, horror-stricken. Countess kneels, holding cross over the Earl. Agnes raises her eyes to heaven.*)

GOD PUNISHES.

END OF ACT FOURTH.

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